LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear WGSS friends,

Welcome to the fall newsletter! Some of you may not know me, I’m an Associate Professor of Geosciences, and I’ve had the privilege of working with WGSS since 2011 as a member of the advisory committee and as chair of the program this fall. It is a very exciting year for us as we welcome two new faculty members, Kai M. Green and Vivian Huang. We are thrilled by their energy and enthusiasm, and the new directions they bring to WGSS in their scholarship and teaching. You can learn more about them and their work in the next few pages.

Kai and Vivian join Greg Mitchell and Kiaran Honderich as the core faculty for the program, and together with faculty from eighteen other departments and programs, are launching a rich and diverse set of WGSS courses and events for students across the Williams community this year.

You can read more about our fall events and spring classes here, including a highlight from the fall, a lecture by Dr. Pavithra Prasad.

I’m grateful to WGSS majors Olivia Goodheart ’18.5 and Julia Blike ’19, who produced and edited this newsletter, and administrative assistant Robin Keller for their dedication to WGSS and their help keeping things running smoothly this fall. Join me in welcoming Alison Case of the English department, who is taking over as chair in January 2018. Alison, a scholar of Victorian literature, is well known to many of you as a longtime contributor to the WGSS curriculum and member of the advisory committee.

Alumni readers, please send news and updates, we’d love to share what you are up to!

Best,
Mea Cook

Contents

01 | Letter from the Chair
02 | WGSS Updates
03 | New WGSS Faculty: Kai M. Green
04 | #TransMultitudes
05 | New WGSS Faculty: Vivian Huang
06 | WGSS 225: Object Lab
07 | Pets of WGSS!
09 | Interview with Dr. Pavithra Prasad
11 | WGSS Fall Events
12 | Uses for a WGSS Major
13 | Spring Courses
WHAT HAVE WE BEEN UP TO?

WGSS COURSES OFFERED IN THE FALL
Cross-listed with nineteen other departments, including Africana Studies, Art History, Sociology, Arabic Studies, Theater, and Asian Studies.

AFFILIATED PROFESSORS
Professors who taught WGSS courses this semester are officially located in eleven different departments.

27

277

CO-HOSTED EVENTS AND SPEAKERS
Including Dr. Mae Jemison, Dr. Pavithra Prasad (interview included in this issue), and a film festival hosted by the class of WGSS 283!

19

16

INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS
Go like our new page, wgss_at_williams, for updates on events, students, professors, and more!

257

LIKES ON FACEBOOK
Go like our Facebook page, WGSS at Williams, for updates about events! Also, if you don’t have Instagram, all of our Instagram posts also get posted to our Facebook, so you can still see them!

WGSS.WILLIAMS.EDU
Dr. Kai M. Green

What is a memorable teaching moment?
I think every moment is truly memorable. I love teaching, and I love the classroom because it’s an opportunity to facilitate space where people can be changed, and where I, too, can be changed. I don’t think every classroom can work that way, but that’s another reason why I came here, because of the investment and curiosity in learning. But I have so many memorable moments, including making big mistakes. In the first class I taught at Northwestern, on the first day of class, I said, “This is a safe space.” And then, three weeks into the class I realized that I had lied, and I had to explain to everyone that I had lied. It wasn’t an intentional lie, but it just turned out not to be true. And it wasn’t something that needed to be true in order for the classroom to be productive, since in some ways safety doesn’t allow true transformation all the time. There’s something about going into the unknown that’s not always safe, it’s scary, but that’s where real learning happens.

What do you like about WGSS?
I like the openness, and that people are willing to ask questions about the curriculum, how we’re teaching, and be willing to change things to create a better future.

Welcome to WGSS!
Interviews with Dr. G and Professor Huang

We got the chance to talk to the two new WGSS professors about how they came to Williams, what they study, and so much more!

What is your main area of study?
I’m an interdisciplinary scholar. The main research that I’ve done has been conducting interviews with Black LGBT folk of South Central Los Angeles, to think about how people create home for themselves, because often we think of Black geographical space as being more homophobic or more hostile, so I was interested in how people in those spaces carve out space for themselves and create love. I’m also currently working on writing a memoir, which is fun and interesting. I also love poetry. But if I had to say what my specialty is, I would say that it’s freedom dreaming.

If you could only listen to one album for the rest of your life, what would it be?
It would probably be a mixtape, with all my favorite songs. On that mixtape, there would be some Donny Hathaway, “Zoom” by the Commodores, Express Yourself. There would definitely be some gospel music, and some sad music. And definitely some Michael Jackson, but Human Nature Michael Jackson, when he was sensitive.

How did you come to Williams?
I was part of Summer Humanities in 2003. That was my first year at Williams, and I graduated in 2007. I came here because I had gone to a summer camp called Camp Rising Sun, which brings young people from all over the world to Rhinebeck, NY, where we spend eight weeks together. They brought people purposefully who had beef with each other, like a Palestinian and an Israeli person, someone who was racist from the South and someone from California, just young people with stories who could potentially be good leaders. That camp had some relationship to Williams so that a lot of campers ended up coming here, and I actually came here because I wanted to be around those people because I liked my camp friends. I came back the second time because Williams brought me back to give a talk for the first Claiming Williams Day, which was exciting, and I came back this time because, although I can’t really remember if I had a good time here or if it was traumatic, but I like to remember it very fondly. I have good feelings when I think about Williams and I don’t have that about very many institutions that I have been to.
For Trans Day of Remembrance 2017, Kai M. Green, Treva Ellison, and CeCe McDonald curated a #TransMultitudes form on The Feminist Wire that featured 16 Black Trans and GNC writers, beginning on 11/20 and continuing through 11/24/17. Please browse the archives at the link below and read, share, comment, and cherish these powerful works.

http://www.thefeministwire.com/category/trans-multitudes-forum/

Day 1 (11/20): When Remembering Forgets, What Forgetting Remembers

Introduction to #TransMultitudes Forum: By Kai M. Green, CeCe McDonald and Treva C. Ellison
Edxie Betts – “When Narrative Is Dystopia”
Lex Kennedy – “When the Tipping Point Melts”
Jay-Marie Hill – “American Taught Me to Forget”
Evolve Benton – “Chef Yulanda”

Day 2 (11/21): How to Move Bodies n Stories or Stories Embodied

Charles H. Greene – “Skins Hiding”
Dora Santana – “A Black Trans Daughterhood of Story-Telling-Literacy”

Day 3 (11/22): The Spirit

J Mase III – “Casting Prayers for Survival: Towards a Black Trans Theology”
Amari Xolá Rasin – “Take me to the Water”
SA Smythe – “some call it a comeback”

Day 4 (11/23): A Turn of Phrase or The WayWords Go

Che Gosset – “Entanglement”
WoMANtíís RANDom – “Luanda Calling, Berlin Burning – (Stop)—”
KOKUMO – “Black, Trans, and Still Breathing”

Day 5 (11/24): Love Notes, Songs n Poems

Sasha Alexander – “Multitudes”
Joshua Allen – “A Love Note To CeCe McDonald”
CeCe McDonald, Treva C. Ellison, and Kai M. Green – “Trans Multitudes and Death Reality: A Coda”
Why Williams?
I was the Bolin Fellow from 2014 to 2016 in WGSS and Comp Lit. I moved here from my graduate work at NYU. I had never lived anywhere so rural or taught at a liberal arts school so it was an eye-opening experience on many levels. After the fellowship ended, WGSS and Comp Lit faculty worked very hard to create a space for me, and I feel like the luckiest prince at the ball, because I got to be here for those two years, and to return is really a gift.

What do you like about WGSS?
I feel special to be here while the WGSS core faculty is expanding so much, but I also know that I have a lot to learn in terms of the entire advisory committee that has worked so hard to make it what it is today. I think there is a special energy in WGSS, because people have had to do the double duty of making sure they’re tending to their home departments and also to WGSS, and that labor of love shows that there’s real heart in the program, real pride in being a WGSS professor or student, in recognizing that feminism matters, and that’s a really special energy to feel.

What is a memorable teaching moment?
One that comes to mind is related to the short film, Forever Bottom by Nguyen Tan Hoang. The film takes the perspective of someone being sodomized, with a lot of him grunting and gyrating, and critiquing through performance this idea of bottomhood as abject. After I screened it in one of my classes, a student approached me, looked at me, and said “I don’t know what to say after seeing that.” She was clearly upset, and had feelings related to the film that weren’t yet able to be articulated, and I remember that interaction being useful for me as a teacher, because I never know the parameters of people’s comfort, and I appreciated that she was working with me, instead of shutting down, since it’s often difficult to stay open to engagement amidst discomfort.

What is your main area of study?
Asian American performance and queer theory. I think my courses represent the different corners of interest in my work. For example, Feelling Queer and Asian looks at Asian diasporic work and queer theory’s interest in affect. Because so much of contemporary, exciting queer scholarship intersects with queer aesthetics and form, I am really excited both for the theoretical rigor of that class and for the range of literature and visual culture.

If you could only listen to one album for the rest of your life, what would it be?
The first thing that came to my head was Tegan and Sara’s The Con. There are a lot of feelings on that album, and there’s something that feels formative, not only historically in terms of gay and lesbian history, but also in terms of my life and the generation I came up in, and all that.

To you, why is it important to have an Asian American Studies Department?
I feel really lucky to be able to do my work here, and to design classes that are engaging with Asian racialization in a US and diasporic context, specifically rooted in a WGSS program, because it then also engages questions of transnational or postcolonial feminisms. There does need to be institutionalization for the kind of work that Asian American studies holds a space for, because it is through that institutional recognition that we can then have more documented, funded, supported intersectional and interdisciplinary conversations. Knowing that this advocacy for Asian American studies has been an ongoing struggle was also exciting for me, in that I was hoping that I could contribute to the critical mass and bring new movement to an existing movement.
Prof. Vivian Huang worked with Liz Gallerani at WCMA to curate an exhibition in the Object Lab for her class, Gender and Sexuality in Asian American Theater. The works are featured here, and can also be viewed at WCMA.

From left column to right column: (1) Patty Chang, Untitled (From "For Abramovic Love Cocteau"), 2000; (2) Chitra Ganesh, Gravity's Dream (From "2008: Expose"), 2008; (3) Momoyo Torimitsu, Miyata Jiro Performance Documentation, Wall St., NY, 1997; (4) Ruth Asawa, Hydrangea, 1964; (5) Patty Chang, Fountain, 1999; (6) Paul Horiuchi, Cascading Black - #2, 1964; (7) Tomie Arai, Kaeru/Return (From "Momotaro/Peach Boy"), 2003
Zinni
My name is Zinnia (Zinni for short), my pronouns are she/her and I am three years old. I am a princess, and my favorite feminist/queer author is Erin Hunter. My love language is words of affirmation, and my favorite toy is my Turbo Scratcher (you can find me napping with it here)! I am Olivia Goodheart’s sweet baby angel.

Dexter
My name is Dexter, my pronouns are he/him and I am six months old. I am a bounding fluffpuddle, and my favorite feminist bedtime story is This Bridge Called My Bark. My love language is physical touch, and my favorite toy is my stuffed unicorn! My best friend and most loved human is Professor Mitchell.

Mo (In Memoriam)
My name is Mo, my pronouns are she/her and I passed at 14 years old, on June 22, 2017. I am extremely loving, and my favorite feminist author is Sara Paretsky. My love language is physical touch, and my favorite toy are all of my students. My best friend and most loved human is Professor Case.

Mister Grey
My name is Mister Grey, my pronouns are he/him and I am 4 years old. I am very tolerant (of toddler tail pulling and toy bashing), and my favorite feminist author is Chimamanda Adichie. My love language is physical touch (I love snuggles!), and my favorite toy is a pair of soft fleecy socks. I live with (and love) Professor Cook.
WGSS PETS

LEARN ABOUT OUR FURRY, FEMINIST FRIENDS!

**Trevor and Percy**
Our names are Trevor and Percy, our pronouns are he/him and we are five years old. We are both rambunctious, and we love to listen to Roxane Gay (we refuse to read no matter how hard our mom tries). Our love language is gifts (we like to deliver decapitated mice to the ones we love). Our favorite toy is decapitated mice. We live with Professor Honderich.

**Barnacle**
My name is Barnacle (Barny for short), my pronouns are he/they/dog and I am five years old. I am mischievous, and my favorite feminist authors are Donna Haraway and José Esteban Muñoz. My love language is quality time (spent chasing squirrels), and my favorite toy is anything that flops and squeaks! My mum is Professor Huang.

**Zoey**
My name is Zoey, my pronouns are she/her and I am one year and ten months old. I am always excited, and my favorite feminist author is undecided. My love language is quality time, and my favorite toy is OMG MY TENNIS BALL. My most loved human is Katie Manning.

**Abby**
My name is Abby, my pronouns are she/her and I am four years old. I am optimistic, and my favorite feminist essay is Donna Haraway’s "The Companion Species Manifesto." My love language is unknown, and my favorite toys are my tennis ball and my pink squeaky crocodile. My mom is Professor Dubow, and I spend much time in Hollander 336 so come visit!!
On a classic Williamstown fall afternoon, we made our way down Spring Street to sit down with Dr. Pavithra Prasad at Tunnel City to discuss her work in performance studies. During our time together, we not only had the pleasure of learning more about Dr. Prasad’s research and creative accomplishments, but also engaged in a joyful conversation about resisting oppressive forces and people through play and performance. I also had the pleasure of attending her talk, “Speculative Lineages: Afro-Indian Internationalism Beyond DuBois’s Dark Princess,” later that day. This dynamic presentation included discussions of the violence against black bodies in India, Pan-Africanism and Pan-Asianism, the fungibility of blackness and brownness in a global international context, and Freddie Mercury, or Farrokh Bulsara, as an embodiment of Dr. Prasad’s concept of “race as costuming or drag.” Dr. Prasad’s incredible work on Afro-Indian Internationalism is indeed powerful, but it was her infectious creativity and playful presence that especially inspired me and gave me renewed energy to continue the struggle against the kyriarchy. Below are selections of our interview with Dr. Pavithra Prasad, which we hope provides you with some of the same joy and laughter that it brought to us.

**What is your story, and how did you come to do the work that you’re doing?**

“I wanted to pursue creative work that was also rigorous theoretically. I was drawn to performance studies as a discipline, which is really an interdisciplinary, and I ended up at Northwestern pursuing a PhD in Performance Studies. I found that it was exactly what I was looking for, in terms of making those disciplinary bridges happen between all of the things that I was interested in, namely music, theater, ethnographic research, and actually doing performance as well; doing performance as a way of doing research, and also as a vehicle for disseminating research. Text can be sort of hegemonic, which is why I said I rarely speak in full sentences, since I like to disrupt the flow of text, and have found that performance is a great way of doing that.”

**What kind of performance do you do?**

“My work has predominantly been solo work that is based on research that I have done and based on speculative fiction and speculative engagements with science research as it intersects with cultural studies. My style is really pastiche, assemblage work. I direct the performance ensemble at my university now, and I do devised work with students, where they’re writing their own material and doing research about a topic. It’s organic, and the end result is often something unpredictable, and we don’t know what it’s going to look like, but I have a vision, and that’s what we run with, an idea, rather than an end goal. I’m interested more recently in still-performance, like photography as performance work. What does it mean to document performance, like racial and gender drag?”

**I really liked that on your online bio you used the expression “iconoclastic geeks, freaks, and radical outsiders,” and I was wondering if you could explain a little about what you mean by that?**

“So I have written a few short pieces about performers in South Asian history who embraced an ambiguity of racial identity, and have used it strategically to find pathways into success in a system that is organized around white supremacy. The layers of performance for me is that I’m always present as a person, and as a character in my pieces, but the historical figures that I’m performing, usually in drag because I’m drawn to performing men, are men who are a little ambiguous in a lot of senses, not just racially and ethnically but also sexually.”

(Cont. on Page 10)
An Interview with
Dr. Pavithra Prasad

Biography:
California State University - Northridge: "Dr. Pavithra Prasad joined the Department of Communication Studies as an Assistant Professor in Fall 2015. She comes to CSUN from the University of Denver where she was a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Communication Studies. She holds a BA in English and Theatre from Ohio Wesleyan University, and a Ph.D. in Performance Studies from Northwestern University. Her research deals with the intersections of race, class, gender, and cultural identity in performances of nightlife and transnational subcultures. Taking an interdisciplinary approach to communication studies, she employs critical race theory, postcolonial studies, and theories of mobility to explore how we understand and engage cultural differences across borders and aesthetic practices. She is currently working on a book that traces the effects of socio-economic neoliberalism on performances of cosmopolitanism, class, and global mobility, in clubs and electronic dance music festivals in India."

From: https://www.csun.edu/mike-curb-arts-media-communication/communication-studies/pavithra-prasad-bio

(Cont. from Page 9):
"I'm working on a piece about Freddie Mercury, who many people did not realize was ethnically Indian. So there's that idea of hiding in plain sight. That's what I mean by outsiders, people who are not really perceived as outsiders, but sometimes they are because of how they're managing their identities and their image. I am also a semi-professional musician, I wouldn’t say professional, but part of my performance work always involves music and singing. I am drawn to musicians, and I try and write about musicians to then perform them. So part of my talk today is looking at performers who use music to facilitate their drag."

Earlier this month Williams hosted Roderick Ferguson, who gave a talk about interdisciplinary studies, and how interdisciplinary practice can form spaces that allow for courage. How can performance and play foster courage?

(Cont.)
"Earlier today I was saying that we are asked to do a lot of emotional and material labor when it comes to resisting certain systems that are unjust, and we are all engaged in that work in some form or another, or most of us who are trying to be engaged in it are, and it takes a toll on you. Not only are you experiencing the effects of those systems, but you’re also having to do the work of pushing back against them, so it’s this double load of fatigue that you’re taking on. So courage is really important, but a playful modality can be really recuperative. I wonder about how play can become a part of this resistance work so that I am not annoyed or angered, because I think it’s a conversation worth having, but it’s also a really tiring conversation."

(Cont.)
"I’m trying to crowdsource ideas from students about ways of creatively bamboozling people. For example, if you’re walking down the street and someone says, “Hey baby, how’s it going,” literally just stop and wait, and freak them out with your response. In this way, you are responding to them, but not in a way that sets you up to be further targeted, because if you say thank you, they say, “Oh so you think you’re hot,” and if you say, “Shut your filthy mouth,” they say “Oh can’t you take a compliment?” You lose either way, so I’m interested in radical and playful ways to resist that recuperate you in some way because you’re having fun while doing it."

Olivia Goodheart and Julia Blike
WGSS Office Assistants
WGSS Fall Events

September
25th: Roderick Ferguson: What is Interdisciplinarity?

October
2nd: Die Mitte der Welt/Center of My World Film Screening
3rd: Speculative Lineages: Afro-Indian Internationalism Beyond DuBois’s Dark Princess
4th: Dementia, Denial, and the Healing Power of Story
5th: Sexagon: Muslims, France, the Sexualization of National Culture Gender Representation in Mathematics
20th: Zahira Kelly: Antiblackness as Latin American Nationalism, Intergenerational Trauma, and Internalizing Colonialism
20th: CODE: Debugging the Gender Gap
23rd: Women in Silicon Valley: Success and Dodging Bullets
27th: Netta Yerushalmy: Paramodernities
27th: Latinx Heritage Month: Netflix’s One Day at Time
31st: WGSS Pre-Registration Party!

November
2nd: Tending to Intangible Wounds: On Community Healing with Queer Xicano Chisme
6th: Qawwalified Home: Spirituality, Resistance, and American Muslims
7th: Black Queer Looks Presents: A Short Film Festival and Discussion
9th: STEM: The Importance of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math with Dr. Mae C. Jemison
I sat at my medical school interview, shocked that the student giving the tour had asked me, "A gender studies major? What are you going to do with that?" "Become a doctor," I said.

I use the work I did preparing my major in Gender Studies every day. The applied understanding of the internal and external forces that make people who they are - women, men, somewhere between, somewhere outside; surgeon, medical doctor; leader, follower, both, neither - make me a better physician, educator and team member.

As a professional female runner I made anywhere from 1/4 to 1/12 what my male counterparts earned in retainer(s) from my title sponsors. I worked on one film and several podcasts/written articles to help fight for change in this area. My WGSS classes helped me to clearly understand and articulate issues of gender equity in media and in live talks/panel discussions.

Differentiation and believing that all children can achieve high levels of study in mathematics are key to my work with educators. This means taking into account all learners in our classroom. I work with our Diversity Coordinator and other Math Leaders in the school to unpack issues of systemic racism and sexism (among other "big eight" identifiers) that impact our students in the classroom. I have found that my background in thinking in this way, in questioning perspectives and the status quo, for instance, have been invaluable to my work.

My background in WGSS gave me a framework for and understanding of social justice and inequity, as well as comfort analyzing complex systems, both of which directly connect to my current work in education and public policy. It also helped me be comfortable moving between disciplines, debating and disagreeing with peers, and strengthened my writing and research skills, which are all the core of what I do professionally.

I work at a feminist research center on a university campus. We fund research that explores gender and gender-based inequalities, as well as cultivate and foster a community on campus that is intersectional and feminist, including bringing speakers to campus and holding events that inspire conversations about these issues. Deep and broad knowledge of feminism -- and ESPECIALLY intersectionality and the ways in which racism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism are related to and connected to misogyny and patriarchy -- is critical to my work.

Our alumni speak
SPRING 2018 COURSES

WGSS 101
WGSS 105: American Girlhoods
WGSS 138: Spectacular Sex
WGSS 154: Histories of American Feminisms
WGSS 205: Gender and Economics
WGSS 222: Women on the Verge
WGSS 226: Gender and the Dancing Body
WGSS 239: History of Sexuality
WGSS 267: Performance Studies
WGSS 311: Theorizing Shakespeare
WGSS 315: Paris on Fire
WGSS 316: Feeling Queer and Asian
WGSS 322: Intro to Critical Theory
WGSS 333: 19th Century British Novel
WGSS 339: Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Discrimination
WGSS 343: Representations of Racial-Sexual Violence
WGSS 344: Women Artists (1550-1700)
WGSS 352: Mystic Spirituality in Black Women's Social Justice Activism
WGSS 380: Freedom Dreams
WGSS 412: Queer Ethnographic Writing
WGSS 468: Practicum in Curating